



Reunion sought for Syrian father and son at Gitmo

By BEN FOX – 3 days ago

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP) — Isolation and harsh conditions at Guantanamo Bay have driven a Syrian prisoner to attempt suicide, repeatedly bang his head against the wall and show other signs of "mental deterioration," his lawyers alleged Friday as they sought an emergency court order to improve his conditions.

Mohammed Khan Tumani, who like his father has been held at Guantanamo without charge for seven years, should be moved to a less restrictive section of the prison and be given an independent medical examination, his lawyers said in a motion filed in a federal court in Washington.

President Barack Obama has ordered Guantanamo to be closed within a year, but lawyers claim conditions for many of the nearly 245 men still held there continue to be abusive. U.S. military officials deny this, insisting the detention center meets international standards.

Khan Tumani's lawyers depict a man showing "clear signs of mental deterioration," who bangs his head against his cell wall for hours and smears the walls with excrement. They say the 26-year-old attempted suicide in late December by slashing his wrist.

"His condition is spiraling downward and has been for a while," said attorney Pardiss Kebriaei. He also has been subjected to "coercive interrogations" and other abuse, his lawyers say.

The lawyers also asked the court to order that the father and son be permitted to have contact with each other, to ease the younger man's sense of isolation. They have been kept separate their entire time at the U.S. prison, although at one point they were in the same building and could shout to each other, Kebriaei said.

U.S. officials have not yet filed a response to the motion but Kebriaei, a lawyer with the New York-based Center for Constitutional Rights, said government attorneys indicated they would oppose it.

A detention center spokeswoman, Navy Cmdr. Pauline Storum, says Khan Tumani has told medical staff he has no mental health problems. "This detainee remains in good physical and mental health, and like all detainees, his health and well-being are closely monitored," she said.

She also denies the prisoner attempted suicide, calling it a "minor cut on his arm," that was quickly treated by medical staff.

His lawyer's response: "We completely disagree with that version of the facts," Kebriaei said.

Khan Tumani is held in Camp 6, which has been particularly criticized by prisoners and human rights groups, who say the solid-walled cells where detainees spend much of the day create the equivalent of endless solitary confinement.

In Camp 4, where Khan Tumani's father is held, prisoners live in communal, dorm-like units and can spend the day outdoors.

Storum defended conditions in Camp 6, saying all prisoners have at least two hours of recreation daily and those "in compliance with camp rules," get at least three hours of communal outdoor recreation daily.

The military, she said, also has improved conditions by allowing well-behaved prisoners to have more "communal time," improving the recreation area and expanding the offerings in the detainee library.